

NATIONAL INDIGENOUS REFORM AGREEMENT

Council of
Australian
Governments

An agreement between

- the Commonwealth of Australia and
- the States and Territories, being:
 - ◆ the State of New South Wales;
 - ◆ the State of Victoria;
 - ◆ the State of Queensland;
 - ◆ the State of Western Australia;
 - ◆ the State of South Australia;
 - ◆ the State of Tasmania;
 - ◆ the Australian Capital Territory; and
 - ◆ the Northern Territory of Australia

This Agreement implements intergovernmental reforms to close the gap in Indigenous disadvantage.

National Indigenous Reform Agreement

INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT ON FEDERAL FINANCIAL RELATIONS

PRELIMINARIES

1. This agreement is created subject to the provisions of the *Intergovernmental Agreement on Federal Financial Relations* and should be read in conjunction with that Agreement and subsidiary schedules. In particular, the schedules include direction in respect of performance reporting and payment arrangements.
2. The Parties are committed to addressing the issue of social inclusion. That commitment is embodied in the objectives and outcomes of this Agreement. However, the Parties have also agreed other objectives and outcomes which the Parties will pursue through the broadest possible spectrum of government action. Consequently, this agreement will be implemented consistently with the objectives and outcomes of all National Agreements and National Partnerships entered into by the Parties.
3. In December 2007, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreed to a partnership between all levels of government to work with Indigenous communities to achieve the target of Closing the Gap in Indigenous disadvantage.
4. This National Indigenous Reform Agreement has been established to frame the task of Closing the Gap in Indigenous disadvantage. It sets out the objectives, outcomes, outputs, performance indicators and performance benchmarks agreed by COAG. It also provides links to those National Agreements and National Partnership agreements across COAG which include elements aimed at closing the gap in Indigenous disadvantage.
5. The National Indigenous Reform Agreement, like other National Agreements, is a living document subject to enhancement over time to reflect additions and changes to existing and new National Agreements and National Partnership agreements. As COAG agrees to additional reforms to close the gap in Indigenous disadvantage, these will be reflected in this Agreement.
6. An Integrated Strategy for Closing the Gap, requested by COAG, will be considered at the Closing the Gap COAG in 2009. The Strategy will discuss the contribution of the current COAG reform initiatives to meeting the Closing the Gap targets, and will identify, against the Building Blocks, areas where further reforms are necessary. Most importantly, it will articulate a process for ongoing consultation with Indigenous Australians in further developing and implementing COAG initiatives. The Strategy will be incorporated into this Agreement once agreed.

COAG framework

7. Despite the concerted efforts of successive Commonwealth, State and Territory governments to address Indigenous disadvantage, there have been only modest improvements in outcomes in some areas such as education and health, with other areas either remaining static or worsening. Even in those areas where there have been improvements, the outcomes for

Indigenous Australians remain far short of the outcomes for non-Indigenous Australians. To Close the Gap in Indigenous disadvantage, COAG has committed to making significant reforms in order to address six specific targets (see Objectives).

8. COAG recognises that overcoming Indigenous disadvantage will require a long-term, generational commitment that sees major effort directed across a range of strategic platforms or 'Building Blocks' which support the reforms aimed at Closing the Gap against the six specific targets. The Building Blocks endorsed by COAG are:
 - (a) Early Childhood;
 - (b) Schooling;
 - (c) Health;
 - (d) Economic Participation;
 - (e) Healthy Homes;
 - (f) Safe Communities; and
 - (g) Governance and Leadership.
9. COAG recognises that strategies aimed at achieving improvements in any particular area will not work in isolation – the building blocks must fit together through the integration of policy ideas and an agreed approach to their implementation. Further information on the Building Blocks is at Box 1.

COAG commitments

10. In the context of the Building Blocks framework, COAG has commenced the task of addressing Indigenous disadvantage across each of the strategic platforms. Some National Partnership agreements have an Indigenous specific focus, addressing one or more of the building blocks:
 - (a) Remote Indigenous Service Delivery;
 - (b) Indigenous Economic Participation;
 - (c) Indigenous Early Childhood Development;
 - (d) Indigenous Health; and
 - (e) Remote Indigenous Housing.
11. Moreover, an important feature of the new COAG framework is the focus on achievement of outcomes – including Indigenous outcomes – through the renegotiated National Agreements, and mainstream National Partnership agreements. These agreements aim to improve outcomes for a wide range of Australians, including Indigenous Australians. Some National Partnerships (such as Improving Teacher Quality) include Indigenous specific outcomes. Further information on the National Agreements and National Partnership agreements can be found at the Policy and Reform Directions section and at Schedule A.
12. A key feature of the new National Agreements will be enhanced reporting against specified indicators – and COAG has agreed to reporting arrangements which will see many indicators disaggregated by Indigenous and non-Indigenous status. This will facilitate close examination by COAG and the public of progress towards Closing the Gaps and will complement other

reporting mechanisms, such as the COAG-sponsored Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage Key Indicators Report.

13. The objectives, outcomes, outputs, performance indicators, and performance benchmarks noted in this and other Agreements will be used by the COAG Reform Council to assess progress in closing the gap in Indigenous disadvantage. In doing so, the COAG Reform Council will have reference to, among other things, the Closing the Gap Measuring Progress framework agreed by COAG (see Performance Benchmarks).
14. To ensure consistency across the development of National Partnership agreements, COAG has agreed service delivery principles (see Schedule B) and principles for investment in remote areas (see Schedule C). These principles are a guide for all COAG reforms, and all governments are expected to take these principles into account in designing policies and providing services.

Box 1: Building Blocks

Improving outcomes for Indigenous people requires adoption of a multi-faceted approach that sees effort directed across a range of Building Blocks. An improvement in the area of one building block is heavily reliant on improvements made on the other Building Blocks.

Early Childhood

For an equal start in life, Indigenous children need early learning, development and socialisation opportunities. Access to quality early childhood education and care services, including pre-school, child care and family support services such as parenting programs and supports, is critical. Appropriate facilities and physical infrastructure, a sustainable early childhood education and health workforce, learning frameworks and opportunities for parental engagement are also important and require attention. Action in the areas of maternal, antenatal and early childhood health is relevant to addressing the child mortality gap and to early childhood development.

Schooling

Human capital development through education is key to future opportunity. Responsive schooling requires attention to infrastructure, workforce (including teacher and school leader supply and quality), curriculum, student literacy and numeracy achievement and opportunities for parental engagement and school/community partnerships. Transition pathways into schooling and into work, post school education and training are also important. Life-long learning is important and attention is also needed regarding adult literacy and numeracy skills.

Health

Achieving improved outcomes for children requires access to, and delivery of, effective primary and preventative health care. Community primary health services play an important role and also need to be responsive to and accountable for achieving government and community health priorities. Parental health is critical to supporting children and the heavy onset of chronic diseases in the 34–45 age range requires concerted effort in prevention, management and treatment. Parents also need the skills to promote healthy, structured lifestyles.

Box 1 (cont): Building Blocks

Economic Participation

Individuals and communities should have the opportunity to benefit from the mainstream economy – real jobs, business opportunities, economic independence and wealth creation. Economic participation needs to extend to disadvantaged job seekers and those outside of the labour market. Access to land and native title assets, rights and interests can be leveraged to secure real and practical benefits for Indigenous people. Other financial assets, capacity building, employment and training programs, incentive structures and social and physical infrastructure, including communications and transport, are needed to foster economic participation and community engagement. Through this participation, parents and other adults can become effective role models for their families and community. The design and delivery of welfare (both transfer payments and services) needs to promote active engagement, enhanced capability and positive social norms. Ensuring that communities have support to address factors that are a barrier to engagement such as problem gambling is critical.

Healthy Homes

A healthy home is a fundamental precondition of a healthy population. Important contributors to the current unsatisfactory living conditions include inadequate water and sewerage systems, waste collection, electricity and housing infrastructure (design, stock and maintenance). Children need to live in accommodation with adequate infrastructure conducive to good hygiene and study and free of overcrowding.

Safe Communities

Indigenous people (men, women and children) need to be safe from violence, abuse and neglect. Fulfilling this need involves improving family and community safety through law and justice responses (including accessible and effective policing and an accessible justice system), victim support (including safe houses and counselling), child protection and also preventative approaches. Addressing related factors such as alcohol and substance abuse will be critical to improving community safety, along with the improved health benefits to be obtained.

Governance and Leadership

Strong leadership is needed to champion and demonstrate ownership of reform. Effective governance arrangements in communities and organisations as well as strong engagement by governments at all levels are essential to long term sustainable outcomes. Indigenous people need to be engaged in the development of reforms that will impact on them. Improved access to capacity building in governance and leadership is needed in order for Indigenous people to play a greater role in exercising their rights and responsibilities as citizens.

OBJECTIVES

15. Through this Agreement, the Parties commit to working together with Indigenous Australians to Close the Gap in Indigenous disadvantage.
16. COAG has agreed to the following targets:
 - (a) closing the life expectancy gap within a generation;
 - (b) halving the gap in mortality rates for Indigenous children under five within a decade;
 - (c) ensuring all Indigenous four years olds in remote communities have access to early childhood education within five years;
 - (d) halving the gap for Indigenous students in reading, writing and numeracy within a decade;
 - (e) halving the gap for Indigenous students in Year 12 attainment or equivalent attainment rates by 2020; and
 - (F) halving the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians within a decade.

OUTCOMES

17. Outcomes describe the impact which government activity is expected to have on Indigenous community wellbeing. COAG has identified outcomes against all the Building Blocks. These COAG agreed Indigenous specific outcomes are at Schedule A.

OUTPUTS

18. Outputs describe the services that are being delivered to achieve outcomes. Links to the National Agreements and National Partnerships which contain Indigenous specific outputs are at Schedule A.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

19. All of the Parties will work co-operatively to realise the objectives and commitments made in this Agreement, including, where required, through the development of Indigenous Implementation Compacts under this Agreement (incorporating implementation plans developed under all Indigenous specific National Partnerships).
20. Each Party commits to be accountable to the community for achieving outcomes in its area of responsibility (consistent with roles and responsibilities outlined in other COAG National Agreements and National Partnership agreements). Further information on roles and responsibilities in specific policy areas can be found in the respective National Agreements and National Partnership agreements. Links to these Agreements are at Schedule A.

Shared responsibility

21. The Commonwealth and States and Territories share the following roles and responsibilities, working in partnership to:
- (a) achieve the agreed COAG targets for Closing the Gap in Indigenous disadvantage;
 - (b) develop a comprehensive and integrated approach to addressing Indigenous disadvantage;
 - (c) develop, progress and review the national objectives and outcomes for Indigenous reform, including monitoring and reviewing the national objectives and outcomes for Indigenous reform against the COAG targets;
 - (d) meet obligations outlined in the National Agreements and National Partnership agreements;
 - (e) provide public leadership which encourages the community to recognise and embrace the importance of the nationally agreed outcomes for Indigenous Australians;
 - (f) ensure the ongoing development of a suitably skilled Indigenous workforce;
 - (g) ensure their data is of high quality, and is available for reporting, including research and evaluation. This includes data and other information required for-
 - (i) meeting the requirements of National Agreements and National Partnership agreements;
 - (ii) the Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision in its role of producing the Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage Key Indicators Report and the Report on Government Services; and
 - (iii) the reporting requirements under the Indigenous Expenditure Framework.
 - (h) ensure data quality improvements, agreed by COAG, are addressed;
 - (i) work across inter-agency and sectoral boundaries, including with the non-government providers of Indigenous services; and
 - (j) engage with Indigenous Australians in the meeting of these responsibilities.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

22. COAG has identified the following Indigenous-specific performance indicators to measure progress against the Closing the Gap targets. These will be used by the COAG Reform Council to help assess progress against the Closing the Gap targets. The role of the COAG Reform Council with respect to this Agreement is set out in the *Intergovernmental Agreement on Federal Financial Relations*. There are also Indigenous performance indicators in other National Agreements and National Partnership agreements (see Schedule A).

Close the life expectancy gap within a generation

- (a) Estimated life expectancy at birth -
 - (i) national, by jurisdiction;
 - (ii) male and female.
- (b) Mortality rate (and excess deaths) by leading causes -
 - (i) national, by jurisdiction;
 - (ii) male and female.
- (c) Hospitalisation rates by principal diagnosis -
 - (i) national, by jurisdiction.
- (d) Rates of current daily smokers -
 - (i) national, by jurisdiction.
- (e) Average daily alcohol consumption and associated risk levels; rates of alcohol consumption at long term risky to high risk levels -
 - (i) national, by jurisdiction.
- (f) Levels of obesity- Body Mass Index -
 - (i) national, by jurisdiction.
- (g) Participation rates in sport, recreation or fitness -
 - (i) national, by jurisdiction.
- (h) Access to health care compared to need -
 - (i) percentage who accessed health care by type of service;
 - (ii) level of need for a health care service, by type.

Halve the gap in mortality rates for Indigenous children under five within a decade

- (a) Child under 5 mortality rate (and excess deaths) -
 - (i) national, by jurisdiction.
- (b) Mortality rates (and excess) deaths by leading causes -
 - (i) national, by jurisdiction;
 - (ii) perinatal, infant, 1-4 years, 0-4 years.
- (c) Child under 5 hospitalisation rates by principal diagnosis -
 - (i) national, by jurisdiction;

- (ii) low birthweight rate;
 - (iii) national, by jurisdiction.
- (d) Tobacco smoking during pregnancy -
 - (i) national, by jurisdiction.
- (e) Antenatal care -
 - (i) national, by jurisdiction;
 - (ii) proportion of mothers with antenatal care in first trimester;
 - (iii) proportion of mothers attending 5 or more antenatal care sessions.

Halve the gap for Indigenous students in reading, writing and numeracy within a decade

- (a) NAPLAN performance -
 - (i) national, by jurisdiction, by geo-location;
 - (ii) years 3, 5, 7, 9;
 - (iii) reading, writing, numeracy.
- (b) NAPLAN student participation rates -
 - (i) national, by jurisdiction, by geo-location;
 - (ii) years 3, 5, 7, 9;
 - (iii) reading, writing, numeracy.

Ensure all Indigenous four year olds in remote communities have access to quality early childhood education within five years

- (a) Proportion of Indigenous children (by remoteness classification, as defined according to the Australian Standard Geographic Classification), who are enrolled in an early childhood education program delivered by a four year university qualified teacher in the year before formal schooling.

Halve the gap for Indigenous students in Year 12 attainment or equivalent attainment rates by 2020

- (a) Apparent retention rates from year 7/8 -
 - (i) national, by jurisdiction, by geo-location;
 - (ii) to year 10;
 - (iii) to year 12.
- (b) Attendance rates -

- (i) national, by jurisdiction, by geo-location;
- (ii) Year 1 to Year 10.

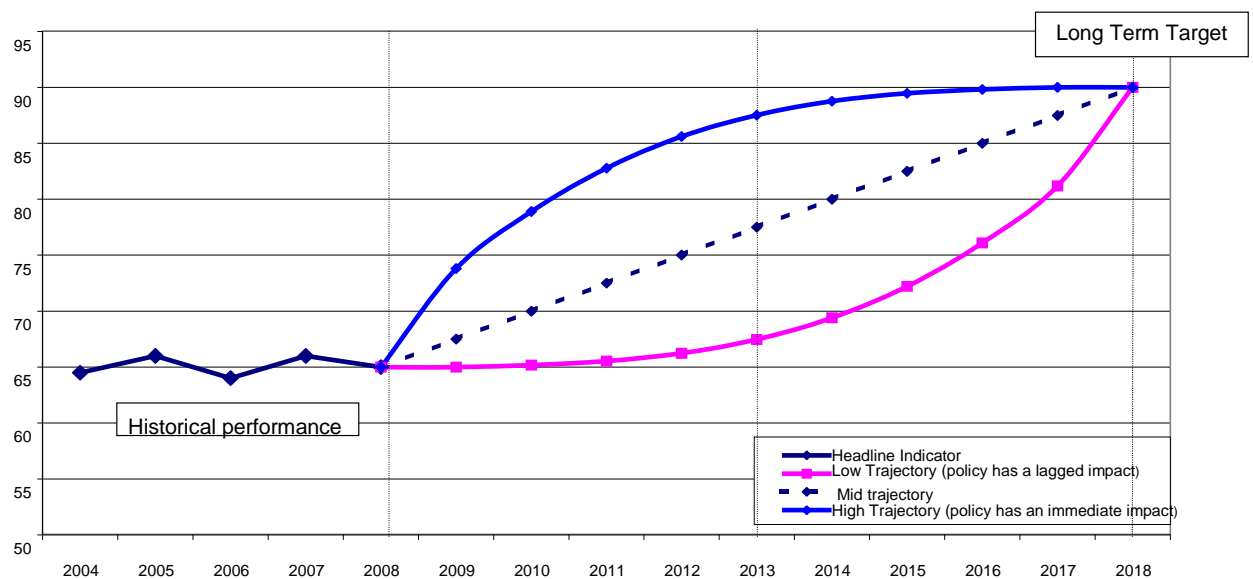
Halve the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians within a decade:

- (a) employment to working age population ratio;
- (b) unemployment rate;
- (c) Labour Force Participation rate;
- (d) CDEP participants and Off CDEP job placement;
- (e) 3-month employment outcomes (post program monitoring);
- (f) the proportion of Indigenous 18-24 year olds engaged in full-time employment, education or training at or above Certificate III; and
- (g) the proportion of indigenous 20-64 year olds with or working towards post school qualification in Certificate III, IV, Diploma and Advanced Diploma.

PERFORMANCE BENCHMARKS

- 23. Whilst annual performance reporting will demonstrate progress being made against the Closing the Gap targets, it will be important that we have an understanding of the likely and required rates of progress in order to achieve the targets in the timeframes set by COAG. This will require analysis of the prospective collective impact of initiatives taken through COAG (and beyond) by all jurisdictions.
- 24. Current trends towards Closing the Gap vary by target — the required trajectories to achieve the six COAG targets are still being developed. At the simplest level, progress towards the targets can be determined by plotting a straight line trajectory between the baseline and the target (mid trajectory). However, the actual trajectory will be a function of the policies and resources allocated to tackle the level of disadvantage. The relationship between inputs and outcomes is unlikely to be linear. In some cases, 'quick win' policies can be implemented immediately, but further gains are difficult. The trajectory will indicate decreasing marginal returns, as in the high trajectory line below. In others, planning, implementation and reporting lags will imply little progress in early years with large pay-offs closer to the target date (low trajectory).

Trajectories towards Targets



25. As the individual target trajectories are developed, this Agreement will be updated. Work on the trajectories across the targets will be prepared for the Closing the Gap COAG meeting in 2009. It will include an assessment of the impacts of COAG initiatives agreed at the October and November COAG meetings. This work will be subject to ongoing refinement. Outlined below is initial commentary on performance benchmarks.

Close the life expectancy gap within a generation

26. Closing the life expectancy gap requires overall Indigenous mortality to fall by as much as 80 per cent. The target will not be met if the current trajectory is maintained. Although Indigenous mortality declined during the 1990s, non-Indigenous mortality fell faster. Overall, the gap has increased¹.
27. To close the 17 year gap, Indigenous life expectancy needs to increase by around one year per year over the target period. While this may at first sound feasible, it requires an overall reduction in Indigenous mortality of around 80 per cent. Gains of this magnitude have taken around 80 years to achieve in the Australian population as a whole, but these gains are yet to translate fully to the Indigenous population.

Halve the gap in mortality rates for Indigenous children under five within a decade

28. The Indigenous infant mortality rate would need to be reduced by an average of 0.4 per cent each year to completely close the gap in infant mortality. In addition, the child mortality (1–4 year olds) rate would need to be reduced by an average of 4 per cent per year.

¹ Hill K, Barker B, and Vos T, 2007. Excess Indigenous mortality: are Indigenous Australians more severely disadvantaged than other Indigenous populations? *International Journal of Epidemiology*; 36: 580-589; Condon JR, Barnes T, Cunningham J, Smith L, 2004. Improvements in Indigenous mortality in the northern territory over four decades. *Aust NZ J Pbl Health*; 28: 445-51.

Halve the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians within a decade

29. The gap in workforce-aged employment to population ratio (also known as the employment rate) at the 2006 Census was around 24 percentage points. To halve this gap to 12 percentage points by 2018, around 100,000 Indigenous Australians would need to be employed. This represents a 63 per cent increase on the number of Indigenous people employed at mid 2006.

Halve the gap for Indigenous students in reading, writing and numeracy within a decade

30. On average (not weighted by student numbers), across years 3, 5 and 7 for reading, writing and numeracy, 70 per cent of Indigenous students and 90 per cent of all students (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) achieved the benchmark proficiency levels. This represents a gap of 20 percentage points.

Ensure all Indigenous four year olds have access to quality early childhood education within five years, including in remote areas

31. To achieve 100 per cent participation by 2013 there would need to be improvement in participation rates for all Indigenous four year olds of an average of 11 percentage points each year over five years. For remote Indigenous four year olds, there would need to be an improvement of an average 10 percentage points each year over five years.

At least halve the gap for Indigenous students in Year 12 attainment or equivalent attainment rates by 2020

32. In 2005, 86.8 per cent of non-Indigenous students achieved a Year 12 certificate compared to 48.7 per cent for Indigenous students; a gap of 38.1 percentage-points. This measure would require the gap to close to 19 percentage points by 2020.

CURRENT POLICY AND REFORM DIRECTIONS

33. The Parties commit to ongoing reforms to overcome Indigenous disadvantage.
34. As at 29 November 2008, the following Indigenous specific National Partnership agreements have been agreed by COAG:
 - (a) Indigenous Early Childhood Development;
 - (b) Remote Service Delivery;
 - (c) Indigenous Economic Participation;
 - (d) Remote Indigenous Housing; and
 - (e) Closing the Gap in Indigenous Health Outcomes.
35. Other National Partnerships (such as Low Socio-Economic Status School Communities) as well as the National Agreements will also play a major role in contributing to meeting the Closing the Gap targets. Schedule A contains more detail and links to these National Agreements and National Partnership agreements.

Future policy and reform directions

36. COAG has identified that further work needs to be undertaken within the Building Blocks framework in the following areas.

Integrated Strategy

37. COAG has requested the development of an Integrated Strategy for achieving the six COAG Closing the Gap targets, including an Indigenous consultation strategy. The Strategy will be developed for consideration at the Closing the Gap COAG in 2009 and incorporated into this Agreement.
38. In developing the integrated strategy for consideration at the Closing the Gap COAG in 2009, an assessment will be made of the contributions of existing initiatives to the Closing the Gap targets. These will be expressed in terms of expected trajectories towards meeting the targets, to be supported by annual review against these trajectories and an assessment of future policy priorities.
39. An attachment to this Agreement will be developed for consideration at the Closing the Gap COAG, setting out baselines and the process of annual reporting against the trajectories.
40. The identification of further policy and reform priorities will be assisted by development of the Integrated Strategy (incorporating an assessment of the likely impacts of COAG initiatives agreed to date) for consideration at the Closing the Gap COAG in 2009.

Remote Indigenous Infrastructure

41. COAG has asked that an National Partnership agreement on the infrastructure needs of the 26 remote Indigenous locations identified in the Remote Service Delivery National Partnership agreement be developed for consideration by COAG at the Closing the Gap COAG in 2009.

Indigenous Expenditure Framework

42. COAG has agreed to the establishment of a National Indigenous Expenditure Framework for reporting expenditure on services for Indigenous Australians. The establishment of this National Framework will enable better informed policy development and evaluation as related to Indigenous affairs in Australia.
43. The National Framework will comprise expenditure by all jurisdictions, at both the Commonwealth and State and Territory levels, and will seek to include both Indigenous specific and mainstream spending on services for Indigenous Australians in areas such as:
- (a) education;
 - (b) justice;
 - (c) health;
 - (d) housing;
 - (e) community services;
 - (f) employment; and

(g) other significant expenditure.

In so doing, the focus will be in relation to on-the-ground services. A report in accordance with this Framework will be provided to COAG annually, and an initial 'stocktake' report will be provided to COAG in 2009.

44. The Steering Committee for the Indigenous Expenditure Framework is also considering options for aligning expenditure data with existing COAG publications and arrangements for reporting on services and outcomes for Indigenous people, so that the value of the expenditure data to policy makers is maximised and the bureaucratic burden is minimised.

Urban and Regional Strategy

45. COAG has requested a regional and urban strategy to coordinate the delivery of services to Indigenous Australians and examine the role that private and community sector initiatives in education, employment, health and housing can make to the success of the overall strategy. The Strategy will be considered by COAG at the Closing the Gap COAG in 2009.

Indigenous Family and Community Safety

46. COAG will consider, at the Closing the Gap COAG, a reform proposal for reward payments of up to \$200 million in total for improvements in services and related outputs relevant to family and community safety.

Closing the gap in indigenous life outcomes

NATIONAL INDIGENOUS REFORM AGREEMENT

Closing the gap in Indigenous life outcomes		
Close the life expectancy gap within a generation Halve the gap in mortality rates for Indigenous children under five within a decade All 4 year olds, including in remote communities, have access to quality early childhood education within 5 yrs Halve the gap for Indigenous students in reading, writing and numeracy within a decade At least halve the gap for Indigenous students in Year 12 attainment or equivalent attainment rates by 2020 Halve the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians within a decade		
Building Blocks	COAG Indigenous Specific Outcomes*	COAG Policy and Reform Directions*
Early Childhood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indigenous children are born and remain healthy Indigenous children have the same health outcomes as other Australian children Children benefit from better social inclusion & reduced disadvantage, especially Indigenous children Quality early childhood education and care supports the workforce participation choices of parent in the years before formal schooling Indigenous children acquire the basic skills for life and learning Indigenous children have access to affordable, quality early childhood education in the year before formal schooling as a minimum 	Indigenous Early Childhood Development NP agreement: To improve the early childhood outcomes of Indigenous children by addressing the high levels of disadvantage they currently experience, to give them the best start in life. Early Childhood Reform NP agreement: Through this Agreement, the Commonwealth and the State and Territories will work together to ensure universal access to quality early childhood education in the year before school.
Schooling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schooling promotes the social inclusion and reduces the educational disadvantage of children, especially Indigenous children. Indigenous children and youth meet basic literacy and numeracy standards, and overall levels of literacy and numeracy are improving Indigenous young people successfully transition from school to work and/or further study 	National Education Agreement All Australian school students acquire the knowledge and skills to participate effectively in society and employment in a globalised economy. Low Socio-Economic Status School Communities NP agreement The Agreement supports a suite of within school and broader reforms designed to transform the way schooling takes place in participating schools and address the complex and interconnected challenges facing students in disadvantaged communities. This Agreement aims to improve student engagement, educational attainment and wellbeing in participating schools, make inroads into entrenched disadvantage (including in Indigenous communities, contribute to broader social and economic objectives and improve understanding about effective intervention that can be implemented beyond the schools participating in this Agreement. Successful implementation of this Agreement will be critical to the achievement of the aspirations, objectives and outcomes set out in the National Education Agreement. Improving Teacher Quality NP agreement The Agreement is designed to improve teacher and school leader quality to sustain a quality teaching workforce. Literacy and Numeracy NP agreement The Agreement will focus on the key areas of teaching, leadership and the effective use of student performance information to deliver sustained improvement in literacy and numeracy outcomes for all students, especially those who are falling behind.

Closing the gap in Indigenous life outcomes		
<p>Close the life expectancy gap within a generation</p> <p>Halve the gap in mortality rates for Indigenous children under five within a decade</p> <p>All 4 year olds, including in remote communities, have access to quality early childhood education within 5 yrs</p> <p>Halve the gap for Indigenous students in reading, writing and numeracy within a decade</p> <p>At least halve the gap for Indigenous students in Year 12 attainment or equivalent attainment rates by 2020</p> <p>Halve the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians within a decade</p>		
Building Blocks	COAG Indigenous Specific Outcomes*	COAG Policy and Reform Directions*
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indigenous Australians and those living in rural and remote areas or on low incomes achieve health outcomes comparable to the broader population. Indigenous people have ready access to suitable and culturally inclusive primary health and preventive services Indigenous people remain healthy and free of preventable disease 	<p>Closing the Gap in Indigenous Health Outcomes NP agreement</p> <p>The Agreement sets out specific action to be taken by the Australian Government and complementary action by State/Territory governments to address the gap in health outcomes experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.</p> <p>National Healthcare Agreement</p> <p>The objective of this Agreement is to improve health outcomes for all Australians and the sustainability of the Australian health system.</p> <p>National Disability Services Agreement</p> <p>The Agreement provides the national framework for the provision of government support to services for people with disabilities.</p> <p>Hospital and Health Workforce Reform NP agreement</p> <p>To improve health workforce, hospitals and capacity.</p> <p>Preventative Health NP agreement</p> <p>The agreement reforms Australia's efforts in preventing the lifestyle risks that cause chronic disease.</p>
Economic Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Indigenous working age population has the depth and breadth of skills and capabilities required for the 21st century labour market Indigenous people of working age participate effectively in all sectors and at all levels of the labour market 	<p>Indigenous Economic Participation NP agreement</p> <p>The Indigenous Economic Participation NP will contribute to the Council of Australian Government target to halve the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people within a decade.</p> <p>National Agreement for Skills and Workforce Development</p> <p>The National Agreement for Skills and Workforce Development identifies the long term objectives of the Commonwealth and State and Territory Governments in the areas of skills and workforce development.</p>

Closing the gap in Indigenous life outcomes		
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Building Blocks	COAG Indigenous Specific Outcomes*	COAG Policy and Reform Directions*
Healthy Homes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indigenous children's living environments are healthy Indigenous families live in appropriate housing with access to all basic utilities Indigenous people have improved housing amenity and reduced overcrowding, particularly in remote areas and discrete communities Indigenous people have the same housing opportunities as other people 	<p>Remote Indigenous Housing NP agreement</p> <p>The Agreement aims to facilitate significant reform in the provision of housing for Indigenous people in remote communities and to address overcrowding, homelessness, poor housing condition and severe housing shortage in remote Indigenous communities.</p> <p>National Affordable Housing Agreement</p> <p>This Agreement provides a framework within which all tiers of government will work together to improve housing affordability for Australians.</p> <p>Homelessness NP agreement</p> <p>The Agreement aims to facilitate significant reforms to reduce homelessness.</p> <p>Social Housing NP agreement</p> <p>This Agreement will assist in addressing homelessness through an increase in the supply of social housing.</p>
Safe Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indigenous children and families are safe and protected from violence and neglect in their home and communities. Alcohol and other drug abuse among Indigenous people is overcome. Breaking cycles of criminal behaviour and violence normalisation 	<p>Further development and refinement to the Community Safety NP agreement is currently underway and will be considered at the Closing the Gap COAG in 2009.</p>
Governance & Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indigenous communities are empowered to participate in policy making and program implementation Indigenous communities are represented through credible consultation/ governance mechanism Connecting the way government agencies work in remote areas (the governance of governments) and developing community capacity 	<p>Remote Service Delivery NP agreement</p> <p>An Agreement to ensure more efficient and effective planning, analysis, coordination, delivery and evaluation of services and better use of resources in selected remote locations.</p>

* NB not all jurisdictions are signatories to all National Partnership agreements.

Service delivery principles for programs and services for Indigenous Australians

NATIONAL INDIGENOUS REFORM AGREEMENT

PRINCIPLES

Purpose

- B1 These principles draw upon the National Framework of Principles for Government Service Delivery to Indigenous Australians agreed to by COAG in 2004. These principles are to guide COAG in the:
- (a) design and delivery of Indigenous specific and mainstream government programs and services provided to Indigenous people; and
 - (b) development and negotiation of National Partnership agreements, National Agreements and reform proposals.

Principles

- B2 *Priority principle:* Programs and services should contribute to Closing the Gap by meeting the targets endorsed by COAG while being appropriate to local community needs.
- B3 *Indigenous engagement principle:* Engagement with Indigenous men, women and children and communities should be central to the design and delivery of programs and services.
- B4 *Sustainability principle:* Programs and services should be directed and resourced over an adequate period of time to meet the COAG targets.
- B5 *Access Principle:* Programs and services should be physically and culturally accessible to Indigenous people recognising the diversity of urban, regional and remote needs.
- B6 *Integration principle:* There should be collaboration between and within Governments at all levels and their agencies to effectively coordinate programs and services.
- B7 *Accountability principle:* Programs and services should have regular and transparent performance monitoring, review and evaluation.

Principles in Detail

- B8 *Priority principle:* Programs and services should contribute to Closing the Gap by meeting the targets endorsed by COAG while being appropriate to local community needs. The COAG targets are:
- (a) close the 17 year life expectancy gap within a generation;
 - (b) halve the gap in mortality rates for children under five within a decade;
 - (c) halve the gap in reading, writing and numeracy within a decade;
 - (d) halve the gap in employment outcomes and opportunities within a decade;
 - (e) at least halve the gap for Indigenous students in Year 12 or equivalent attainment rates by 2020; and
 - (f) within five years provide access to a quality early childhood education program to all Indigenous four year olds in remote Indigenous communities.
- B9 *Indigenous engagement principle:* Engagement with Indigenous men, women and children and communities should be central to the design and delivery of programs and services. In particular, attention is to be given to:
- (a) recognising that strong relationships/partnerships between government, community and service providers increase the capacity to achieve identified outcomes and work towards building these relationships;
 - (b) engaging and empowering Indigenous people who use Government services, and the broader Indigenous community in the design and delivery of programs and services as appropriate;
 - (c) recognising local circumstances;
 - (d) ensuring Indigenous representation is appropriate, having regard to local representation as required;
 - (e) being transparent regarding the role and level of Indigenous engagement along a continuum from information sharing to decision-making; and
 - (f) recognising Indigenous culture, language and identity.
- B10 *Sustainability principle:* Programs and services should be directed and resourced over an adequate period of time to meet the COAG targets. In particular, attention is to be given to:
- (a) service system orientation, particularly:
 - (i) using evidence to develop and redesign programs, services and set priorities;
 - (ii) recognising the importance of early intervention; and
 - (iii) including strategies that increase independence, empowerment and self management;
 - (b) ensuring adequate and appropriate resources, particularly:
 - (i) setting time-frames for meeting short, medium and longer-term targets and outcomes;

- (ii) considering flexibility in program design to meet local needs;
- (iii) considering workforce supply and future planning;
- (iv) considering sustaining or redesigning services to best use existing resources, as well as the need for programs and services to meet the COAG targets;
- (v) minimising administrative red tape to enable greater integration of program and service delivery;
- (vi) ensuring that programs and services are efficient and fiscally sustainable; and
- (vii) ensuring that infrastructure is appropriate and adequately maintained;
- (c) building the capacity of both Indigenous people and of services to meet the needs of Indigenous people, particularly:
 - (i) developing the skills, knowledge and competencies, including independence and empowerment of Indigenous people, communities and organisations;
 - (ii) supporting Indigenous communities to harness the engagement of corporate, non-government and philanthropic sectors;
 - (iii) building governments' and service delivery organisations' capacity to develop and implement policies, procedures, and protocols that recognise Indigenous people's culture, needs and aspirations;
 - (iv) ensuring that programs and services foster and do not erode capacity or capability of clients; and
 - (v) recognising when Indigenous delivery is an important contributor to outcomes (direct and indirect), and in those instances fostering opportunities for Indigenous service delivery.

B11 *Access Principle:* Programs and services should be physically and culturally accessible to Indigenous people recognising the diversity of urban, regional and remote needs. In particular, attention is to be given to:

- (a) considering appropriate and adequate infrastructure and placement of services (including transport, IT, telecommunications and use of interpreter services);
- (b) minimising administrative red tape that may be a barrier to access; and
- (c) providing adequate information regarding available programs and services.

B12 *Integration principle:* There should be collaboration between and within Governments at all levels, their agencies and funded service providers to effectively coordinate programs and services. In particular attention is to be given to:

- (a) articulating responsibilities between all levels of government;
- (b) identifying and addressing gaps and overlaps in the continuum of service delivery;
- (c) ensuring services and programs are provided in an integrated and collaborative manner both between all levels of governments and between services;

- (d) ensuring services and programs do not set incentives that negatively affect outcomes of other programs and services; and
- (e) recognising that a centrally agreed strategic focus should not inhibit service delivery responses that are sensitive to local contexts.

B13 *Accountability principle:* Programs and services should have regular and transparent performance monitoring, review and evaluation. In particular, attention is to be given to:

- (a) choosing performance measures based on contribution to the COAG targets and report them publicly;
- (b) ensuring mainstream service delivery agencies have strategies in place to achieve Indigenous outcomes and meet Indigenous needs;
- (c) clearly articulating the service level to be delivered;
- (d) ensuring accountability of organisations for the government funds that they administer on behalf of Indigenous people;
- (e) periodically measuring/reviewing to assess the contribution of programs and services to the above, and adapting programs and services as appropriate;
- (f) clearly defining and agreeing responsibilities of government and communities;
- (g) supporting the capacity of the Indigenous service sector and communities to play a role in delivering services and influencing service delivery systems/organisations to ensure their responsiveness, access and appropriateness to Indigenous people; and
- (h) evaluating programs and services from multiple perspectives including from the client, Indigenous communities and government perspectives and incorporating lessons into future program and services design.

National Investment Principles in Remote Locations

NATIONAL INDIGENOUS REFORM AGREEMENT

PRINCIPLES

C1 National principles for investment in remote locations include:

- (a) remote Indigenous communities and communities in remote areas with significant Indigenous populations are entitled to standards of services and infrastructure broadly comparable with that in non-Indigenous communities of similar size, location and need elsewhere in Australia;
- (b) investment decisions should aim to-
 - (i) improve participation in education/training and the market economy on a sustainable basis;
 - (ii) reduce dependence on welfare wherever possible;
 - (iii) promote personal responsibility; and
 - (iv) engagement and behaviours consistent with positive social norms;
- (c) priority for enhanced infrastructure support and service provision should be to larger and more economically sustainable communities where secure land tenure exists, allowing for services outreach to and access by smaller surrounding communities, including-
 - (i) recognising Indigenous peoples' cultural connections to homelands (whether on a visiting or permanent basis) but avoiding expectations of major investment in service provision where there are few economic or educational opportunities; and
 - (ii) facilitating voluntary mobility by individuals and families to areas where better education and job opportunities exist, with higher standards of services.